



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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Honorable Max Baucus
United States Senator
30 - 4th Street East
Kalispell, MT 59901

OCT 17 2003

FAX TO:
John Wardell
8mo
HOG-457-5055
FYI
FROM: Sandy Falls
Denver
303-312-6604

Dear Senator Baucus:

Thank you for your letter of September 15, 2003, to EPA Acting Administrator Marianne Horinko on behalf of Don and Sharon Winkler. The Winklers had several concerns regarding how the Environmental Protection Agency handled the cleanup at the Libby Asbestos Site and, specifically, the cleanup of their property. I appreciate this opportunity to provide the following information in response to the Winklers' concerns.

Fortunately, the Libby Site Team was able to work through the issues with the Winklers, and their rental property was cleaned up during the summer of 2003. Most of the Winklers' concerns at the time their letter was written to you were rooted in the fact that EPA initially did not plan to remove the insulation from the attic in their rental property. Generally, EPA will not remove vermiculite insulation from areas where it is well contained and cannot be routinely disturbed or accessed, such as from walls. Our initial inspection of their property revealed a very small attic space, no deeper than 18 inches, with no existing access points. However, upon further inspection and discussion with the Winklers, it became clear that removal of the insulation was the best approach in this case; and we removed it.

The Winklers also presented some related concerns in their letter regarding property values, insurance underwriting, and working with vermiculite. While we disagree with some assertions made in their letter, the Winklers raise legitimate issues; and EPA is working hard to address these issues related to vermiculite insulation, both in Libby and elsewhere in the United States. Our cleanup program in Libby is also maturing, and we believe the satisfaction and degree of understanding in the community continues to improve.

We appreciate your continued interest in EPA's activities in Libby. If you or your staff have additional concerns, please contact me or Jim Christiansen, our Project Manager for the Libby cleanup, at 303-312-6748.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Roberts
Regional Administrator

